



# Deer-Vehicle Collision Information Kit

## Use Caution to Avoid Deer-Vehicle Collisions

LINCOLN, Neb. – Deer become more active in the fall and because of it, drivers should be more alert than ever when out on the road.

Deer pose a potentially dangerous threat to themselves and the occupants of vehicles traveling Nebraska's highways and country roads, especially during October and November.

As the harvest begins, crop and cover patterns will change quickly and daylight hours will become shorter. As the deer breeding season approaches, deer will have a lot of things to distract them. Deer activity increases and movement peaks each day near dawn and just after dusk.

Here are some things drivers can do to try to avoid deer-vehicle accidents:

- When driving near shelterbelts, woodlots, creeks, or where crops are still standing, especially during evening or early morning, reduce your speed and watch for deer.
- When you spot a deer, assume there will be others in the same area, either ahead of or behind the one you have seen.
- Be prepared to stop suddenly.
- Many places where deer are known to travel are posted with deer crossing signs, but the absence of a sign does not mean a deer will not unexpectedly appear.
- Deer often seem to be disoriented or confused by headlights. Some react by freezing in the light, some dart into the path of the vehicle, others bolt away in the opposite direction. Sometimes deer that have just crossed the road ahead of the vehicle suddenly change direction and run back into the path of a vehicle or collide with it.
- Honk your horn and flash your headlights to frighten deer away from the side of the road. If there is other traffic on the road, you can activate your emergency flashers and tap your brakes to alert other drivers to the potential danger.
- Anticipate the possibility of a deer unexpectedly crossing in front of you and plan ahead to avoid swerving, turning or braking the vehicle too sharply if a deer suddenly appears.

If a deer is struck and the driver wants to salvage it, the driver may possess the deer but must contact a Nebraska Game and Parks Commission conservation officer within 24 hours to obtain a salvage tag.

## **Tips for Avoiding Deer-Vehicle Collisions**

- Be alert for deer at all times, especially during dusk and dawn and especially when driving near shelterbelts, woodlots, creeks, or where crops still are standing.
- Reduce your speed at night and be prepared to stop suddenly.
- If you see one deer, expect to see others.
- Stay on the road and strike the animal; do not swerve or leave the roadway and collide with a roadside object and do not cross the centerline.
- Expect more deer near deer crossing signs because they should be installed where this is true.
- Honk your horn or flash your headlights to frighten the deer away.
- Search and scan the roadway and roadside ahead.
- Keep your windshield clean.
- Buckle your seatbelt.
- Stay sober.
- Keep your headlights properly adjusted.
- Use your high beams where possible.

# Avoiding Car-deer Collisions

**Defensive driving, seasonal awareness and liberal deer harvest reduce wrecks**

By Doug Carroll

**T**he doe seemingly came out of nowhere. One minute there was nothing but darkness and the twin beams of my car's headlights illuminating my side of the four-lane highway. The next minute a ghostly figure was moving from the grassy median, striding purposefully

across the pavement, seemingly oblivious to the heavy metal beast with bright, gleaming eyes hurtling toward it.

My foot was on the brake the instant my brain registered movement from the corner of my eye. Pressing hard enough to cut my speed significantly without locking



Unpredictable at best, a deer standing alongside the road is a potential hazard that all drivers should pay particular attention to.

DOUG CARROLL



In today's fast-paced society, deer carcasses are a common sight on Nebraska roadsides and illustrate the need for careful driving.

up, I tried to steer around the deer without losing control but I could not swerve in time. My car's front quarter panel smashed into the doe's chest and neck with a loud thud, spinning the animal and sending its rear into the driver's side door.

Coming to a complete stop, I waited for my heart rate to slow and the adrenaline to ebb from my body. The incident happened so fast that my youngest son and daughter, who were riding with me, did not know what had happened. Answering their many questions, I realized how lucky we had been – if I had not been watching, I

might have hit the deer squarely with the front of the car, causing more damage and sending the animal into the windshield. In 25-plus years of driving, most of it in prime deer habitat, this was the first time I had hit a deer. I hope it will be the last. Here are some tips that might help you avoid a similar incident.

## Beware at Twilight

First, be very cautious when driving at night, especially at dawn or dusk. Deer are crepuscular, meaning they are most active at twilight. They usually feed in the evening, rest for a while to

chew their cud, then feed again in the early morning hours before moving to their bedding area shortly after sunrise. This means they are often most active in the low-light hours when people are heading to or from work, school or other activities.

Second, be very alert when traveling through deer territory – which is most of Nebraska. The population is more dense in some areas, such as along riverbottoms and near eastern Nebraska farm fields, but deer can be found anywhere, at any time – even in cities. Last winter I saw two deer feeding along the railroad tracks just a block

from downtown Lincoln. While I was alert to deer the night that I hit the doe, I probably had a false sense of security because I was not traveling through a river or creek drainage.

There was, however, a small finger of trees bisecting two cornfields next to the highway, and that leads to another tip: Deer often travel along drainages and treelines as they move from one area to another. They are also creatures of habit and use the same travel corridors year after year. The places where these corridors cross heavily traveled roads are often marked with deer crossing signs. Don't ignore them – they are



not placed arbitrarily. Of course, an absence of signs doesn't mean an area is safe — deer can't read. Pay special attention to any place where you've seen deer in the past, whether they were dead or alive. One thing I did right on the night I hit the deer was that I was

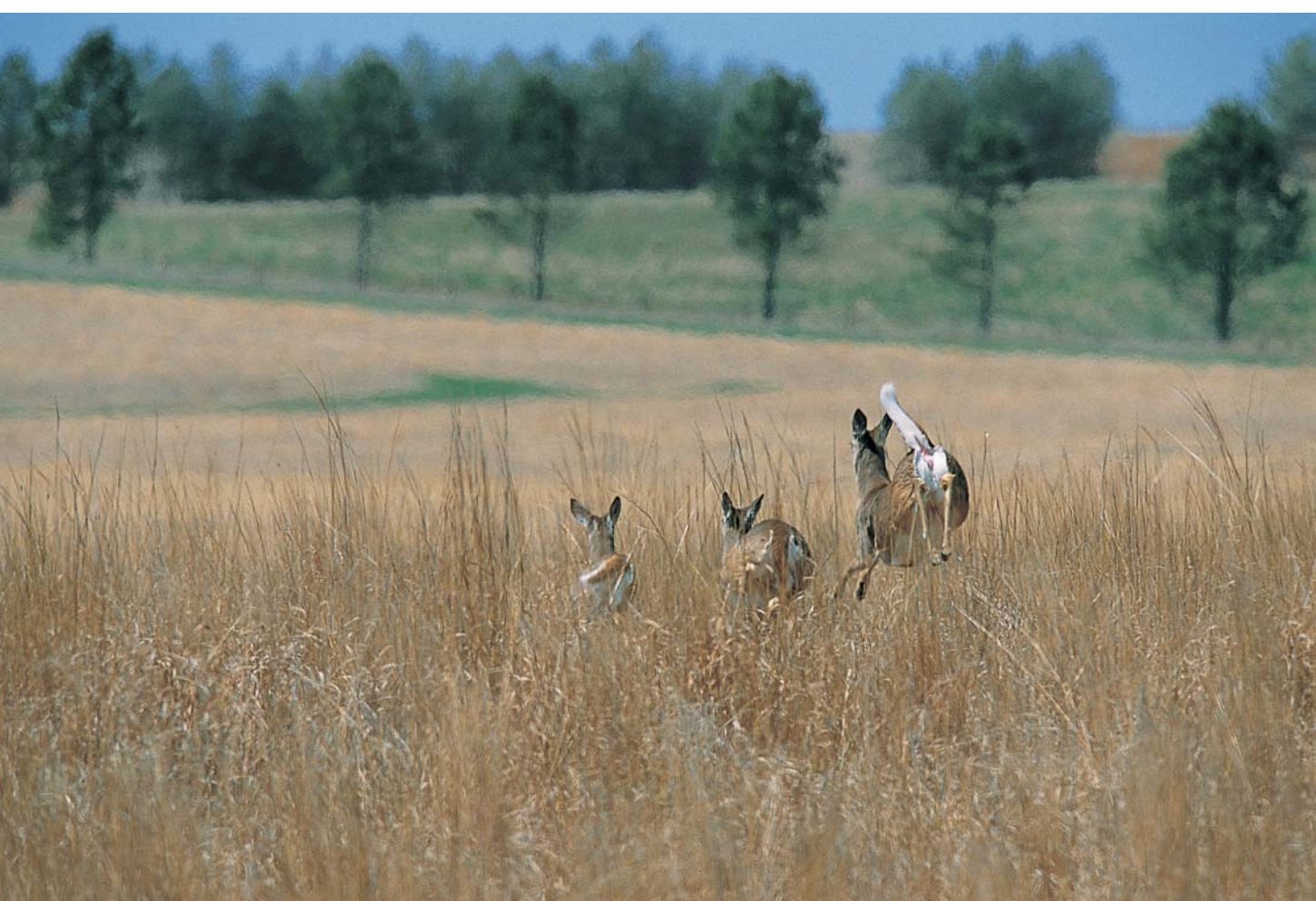
watching the edge of the road ahead. Watch the sides of the road and slow down if you see a deer or its eyeshine near the road. Deer are unpredictable. If you see a deer and it seems to be looking at your car and waiting for you to pass, be prepared to stop if the deer suddenly starts to cross the road. Even if a deer crosses safely in front of your vehicle, slow down. Deer often travel in small groups and others might be following. Or the deer that just crossed the road might reverse course and recross it.

### Avoid Extreme Maneuvers

Another thing I did right was I did not take extreme evasive action. Drivers sometimes make a bad situation worse by veering into oncoming traffic or hitting a fixed object such as a pole

while trying to avoid a deer. If you cannot stop in time to avoid a crash, brake until the last fraction of a second before impact, then let off your brakes. This will cause the front end of your vehicle to rise, increasing the odds that the deer will pass beneath the car or truck instead of being launched into your windshield. My youngsters and I were buckled up, which made us law-abiding and, more important, a lot safer. The odds of surviving a collision without serious injury or death are two to three times greater for people wearing seat belts.

A deer can appear in front of your car at any time of year, but most deer/vehicle collisions occur in autumn. When the fall crop harvest begins, deer's summer feeding and bedding patterns change and they move more often. Daylight grows shorter in the



Social by nature, deer seldom travel alone. If you see one deer crossing the road, expect others to be with it.

ERIC FOWLER



DOUG CARROLL

By increasing the doe harvest in parts of the state, the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission has reduced the deer population where crop depredation complaints and deer-vehicle accidents are high.

fall, meaning more people are traveling at dawn and dusk when deer are most active. Deer also do more running around during their fall breeding season. It's no wonder the collision count goes up during autumn.

### Collisions Are Costly

The average number of deer/vehicle accidents reported in Nebraska from 2000 through 2004 was almost 3,740, peaking at 3,951 in 2003. These numbers come from the Highway Safety — Traffic Engineering Division of the Nebraska Department of Roads, but they only include those accidents that were investigated and reported by local law enforcement personnel. Many more collisions occur that are not reported or investigated.

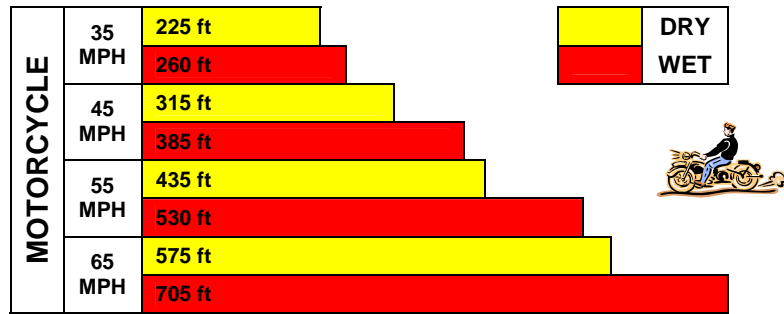
The number of deer-vehicle collision reports dropped significantly in 2004, which might indicate the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission's liberalized antlerless harvest over the past few years is beginning to reduce deer populations in some parts of the state. Deer-vehicle collision reports and crop depredation complaints are the major reasons why the Commission tries to reduce deer populations in some areas. Wildlife managers have made special efforts to reduce the population where complaints and accidents have been high in recent years, especially in southeastern Nebraska.

While the chance of hitting a deer is low, drivers should consider the possibility every time they get behind the wheel. More than 150 people are killed

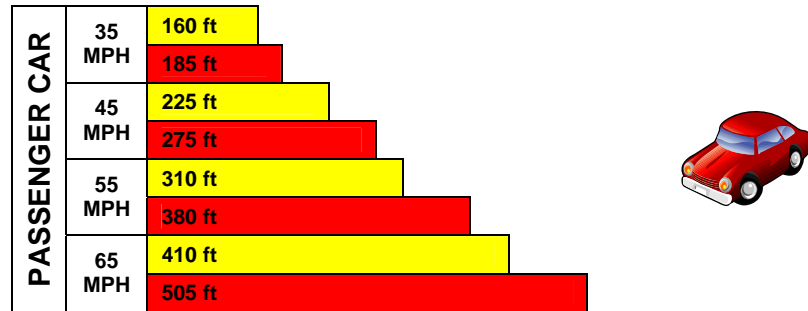
and 29,000 injured annually in animal-vehicle collisions nationwide. Hitting a deer can be expensive too. According to the Insurance Information Institute, a national organization that provides information about the insurance industry, the average minimum cost for repairing a vehicle after a collision with a deer is \$2,000. A federal General Accounting Office report states that deer-automobile accidents result in more than \$1 billion in property damage annually.

While at one time deer were uncommon in Nebraska, there are now approximately 300,000 deer in the state each fall. Many deer will rarely, if ever, cross a road, but enough do so on a regular enough basis that it makes sense to keep an eye out for them. Doing so will save lives and money. ■

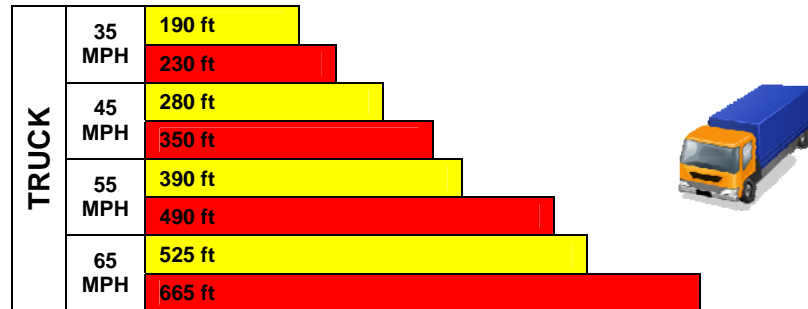
## SPEED & STOPPING DISTANCES



100 ft	200 ft	300 ft	400 ft	500 ft	600 ft
1 Football Field 100 yds			2 Football Fields 200 yds		



100 ft	200 ft	300 ft	400 ft	500 ft	600 ft
1 Football Field 100 yds			2 Football Fields 200 yds		



100 ft	200 ft	300 ft	400 ft	500 ft	600 ft
1 Football Field 100 yds			2 Football Fields 200 yds		

## SPEED & STOPPING DISTANCES

Drivers who exceed the posted speed limit or drive too fast for conditions increase the length of time and distance necessary to stop their vehicles. The faster a vehicle is moving, the greater distance it will travel while the driver reacts to a situation. It is important for drivers to adjust their driving behavior to adapt to road and weather conditions.

The estimated distances which could be needed by a typical driver to stop a motorcycle, automobile, and tractor/trailer are shown on the opposite side of this piece. These estimated distances are shown in feet and a football field is used as a common reference point.

Note that the estimated distances are based on distances required by Federal regulations or based on those assumed for roadway design purposes by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials.

Provided by:  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

# Animal-Involved Crashes By County

## 1998-2008

County	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Adams	69	67	47	66	52	59	50	46	48	50	47
Antelope	47	47	51	34	38	38	40	29	41	45	43
Arthur	6	3	6	3	3	5	6	3	4	3	3
Banner	7	16	7	3	9	13	6	8	9	6	11
Blaine	3	4	5	6	2	4	5	3	6	2	1
Boone	35	22	28	24	20	39	22	22	22	12	20
Box Butte	25	18	24	21	19	11	19	10	16	10	14
Boyd	17	9	12	7	7	10	8	7	8	12	6
Brown	15	21	14	17	14	16	14	7	10	10	20
Buffalo	129	128	84	102	117	105	81	77	83	85	94
Burt	35	27	43	33	32	43	34	42	46	23	27
Butler	22	24	25	19	17	21	20	23	29	26	20
Cass	131	152	147	157	131	142	143	131	154	116	126
Cedar	36	20	34	21	25	25	26	20	29	24	35
Chase	9	6	5	5	9	7	4	6	7	5	11
Cherry	11	14	12	16	7	12	10	9	8	6	5
Cheyenne	17	23	19	16	13	10	15	23	14	20	18
Clay	44	48	47	32	37	44	36	26	23	25	27
Colfax	37	31	32	31	41	34	22	27	25	31	34
Cuming	50	54	63	71	64	61	42	42	41	41	44
Custer	63	77	48	39	31	35	36	30	29	32	39
Dakota	17	16	32	28	22	38	30	26	22	29	20
Dawes	29	40	45	50	45	44	53	54	47	37	25
Dawson	81	79	70	56	51	58	64	61	61	65	70
Deuel	8	6	7	11	12	4	3	9	5	8	4
Dixon	21	12	25	16	23	23	29	22	13	15	16
Dodge	86	124	97	116	101	74	54	35	44	36	30

Provided by: Nebraska Office of Highway Safety - DOR, 1500 S. 14th Street, Lincoln, NE 68512

Source: Nebraska Department of Roads, Traffic Engineering, Accident Records Division

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## 1998-2008

County	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Douglas	160	145	133	153	174	189	131	139	140	141	147
Dundy	15	12	7	3	5	9	8	13	8	9	10
Fillmore	21	15	28	12	12	23	17	18	14	13	12
Franklin	44	44	21	45	37	39	44	43	38	32	52
Frontier	28	26	19	28	20	20	14	14	22	16	15
Furnas	46	57	51	51	69	43	40	28	29	25	35
Gage	152	188	193	214	163	212	168	173	163	167	165
Garden	13	12	16	10	16	9	15	19	18	16	15
Garfield	14	9	8	6	7	10	9	5	5	9	4
Gosper	21	18	20	18	25	20	20	22	16	14	8
Grant	5	3	8	5	3	3	4	2	4	2	1
Greeley	17	15	13	13	15	15	16	8	13	6	6
Hall	96	85	96	69	95	83	74	61	72	83	73
Hamilton	61	83	60	61	66	70	67	73	69	64	67
Harlan	35	34	26	40	27	55	35	22	35	35	31
Hayes	12	12	8	11	11	6	5	9	4	7	8
Hitchcock	15	13	20	19	18	16	17	20	15	22	20
Holt	42	40	53	49	46	37	31	31	26	19	28
Hooker	4	7	2	3	1	1	1	5	2	0	0
Howard	48	55	64	50	51	51	25	34	32	37	36
Jefferson	103	94	97	90	105	122	92	93	83	116	109
Johnson	67	66	62	75	66	57	25	20	28	34	20
Kearney	34	33	29	34	31	21	29	21	33	26	25
Keith	47	45	31	33	30	16	33	41	34	29	51
Keya Paha	2	7	3	4	4	3	7	1	7	12	11
Kimball	8	13	13	9	9	5	4	4	11	5	6
Knox	30	28	31	21	27	30	19	20	22	25	21

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County	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Lancaster	224	288	229	244	295	296	247	222	323	275	250
Lincoln	83	97	84	79	88	68	93	74	86	117	107
Logan	10	4	4	1	1	4	5	8	8	7	4
Loup	17	8	13	8	13	6	5	4	3	5	12
Madison	52	49	50	47	53	34	33	25	27	28	33
McPherson	3	0	4	3	3	2	2	3	0	5	2
Merrick	59	47	55	56	43	40	35	30	28	43	41
Morrill	45	28	46	31	45	33	32	33	39	24	39
Nance	16	30	33	31	14	23	20	16	19	12	19
Nemaha	79	69	60	56	66	49	39	38	42	37	30
Nuckolls	39	36	31	39	30	33	24	21	25	28	34
Otoe	61	54	52	46	41	51	45	36	43	43	50
Pawnee	64	56	76	62	63	52	52	43	23	19	19
Perkins	7	11	13	8	11	8	7	8	8	8	4
Phelps	19	16	12	13	23	19	18	10	14	15	22
Pierce	30	25	16	26	20	23	27	13	30	19	17
Platte	56	86	63	78	71	65	55	51	62	48	50
Polk	23	20	21	26	30	19	16	15	20	23	32
Red Willow	32	31	26	27	26	25	23	15	28	30	34
Richardson	54	62	56	65	44	45	49	30	47	35	31
Rock	16	17	20	15	14	8	6	6	10	9	7
Saline	74	89	95	97	81	96	75	77	88	93	87
Sarpy	144	196	156	190	191	173	121	128	132	149	119
Saunders	70	61	44	53	43	49	36	42	48	46	57
Scotts Bluff	57	65	62	83	73	63	53	56	80	93	63
Seward	89	97	108	98	108	117	109	92	83	75	98
Sheridan	19	25	27	33	40	27	33	16	28	25	18

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County	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Sherman	27	29	29	20	19	15	17	16	15	11	18
Sioux	10	10	6	9	12	4	7	11	13	4	5
Stanton	28	18	21	19	10	12	8	6	8	6	3
Thayer	63	54	64	84	61	41	30	29	33	42	33
Thomas	5	7	6	2	4	4	5	2	3	8	8
Thurston	18	10	16	28	28	27	21	19	23	21	18
Valley	17	35	18	20	13	18	25	17	17	17	13
Washington	67	84	97	99	112	138	102	108	108	96	117
Wayne	22	16	17	17	15	14	21	11	21	14	11
Webster	46	44	46	44	57	64	50	56	64	51	63
Wheeler	9	8	6	7	7	7	5	12	6	1	4
York	60	46	59	45	53	63	39	34	46	61	52
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,004</b>	<b>4,175</b>	<b>3,982</b>	<b>4,035</b>	<b>3,996</b>	<b>3,975</b>	<b>3,412</b>	<b>3,170</b>	<b>3,488</b>	<b>3,381</b>	<b>3,410</b>